



State of New Jersey

Department of Environmental Protection  
PO Box 402  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0402

James E. McGreevey  
Governor

Bradley M. Campbell  
Commissioner

October 18, 2004

Dear Superintendent/School Business Administrator:

On August 20, 2004, the Council on Local Mandates nullified the New Jersey law requiring radon testing in public school buildings (N.J.S.A. 18A:20-40). Following the Council's decision, several school districts have asked the Department of Environmental Protection for guidance.

We strongly encourage all schools to test for the presence of radon. The more radon that the school children, teachers, and employees are exposed to, and the longer the exposure, the greater the risk of eventually developing lung cancer. Radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, it may be responsible for 15,000 to 22,000 deaths per year. In New Jersey, of the 4,500 lung cancer deaths reported annually, as many as 200-300 may be associated with radon exposure. These estimates of cancer risk from radon exposure are less than those caused by smoking, but are far greater than the number of cancers estimated to occur as a result of exposure to other environmental hazards, such as toxic chemicals in drinking water or pesticide residues on food.

Testing your school buildings for radon can identify unacceptably high levels of radon. If unacceptably high levels of radon are found, proven mitigation methods can be employed to significantly reduce children's exposure and thereby lower their risk of developing lung cancer in future years.

Even in areas of New Jersey with low potential for radon problems there can be local geological formations that generate high concentrations of radon in a very small area. Residential testing has identified many New Jersey communities that have small numbers of homes with relatively high radon levels among much larger groups of homes with low radon levels.

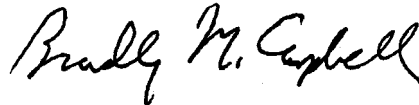
Both the EPA and the DEP recommend that radon testing be conducted in all frequently occupied classrooms and offices that are in contact with the ground or are directly above unoccupied areas of the basement. Testing can be done by a certified contractor for as little as \$20 per room.

I know from inquiries from school administrators from all over New Jersey that many school districts have already set aside funding and, in some cases, negotiated contracts to perform radon

testing during this year. If your district is among those who were preparing to test for radon, I strongly encourage you to follow through with your plans. If you were not planning to test this school year, I encourage you to do so as soon as feasible.

A wide variety of information regarding radon is available on our Web site at [www.nj.gov/dep/rpp/radon/index.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/rpp/radon/index.htm). Please direct any questions or concerns you may have to Gerald P. Nicholls, Ph.D., Director, Division of Environmental Safety and Health, at (609) 633-7964.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bradley M. Campbell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" and "C".

Bradley M. Campbell  
Commissioner